



MINNESOTA

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, water is an integral part of Minnesota's cultural and economic fabric. From the Mississippi Headwaters and the Boundary Waters to the North Shore of Lake Superior and Minnehaha Falls, the state's iconic waters bolster tourism, recreation, and local economies. Minnesota also is a leader in conserving lands, from national parks to neighborhood open spaces. The park systems in the Twin Cities have consistently been ranked the best in the nation,¹ and 85% of residents say that expanding and maintaining parks and trails is important to their quality of life.²

Conservation protects resources for fishing, hunting, and wildlife-based recreation. Over 1.5 million people fish, nearly 500,000 people hunt, and over 1.5 million participate in wildlife watching in Minnesota each year. Together these activities generate over \$3.7 billion in annual spending in the state.³

Conservation powers Minnesota's economy—attracting workers and employers, supporting vibrant communities, and drawing visitors from around the world. Minnesota is known nationally and internationally for its more than 11,000 lakes and for its iconic parks.

- Minnesota's local parks and recreation agencies generate over \$2.5 billion in economic activity each year and support over 20,000 jobs.⁴ State parks hosted 10 million visitors in 2016—the largest number in the system's 125-year history—and generated an estimated \$250 million in economic activity.⁵
- Conservation provides the infrastructure for Minnesota's growing outdoor industry. Each year 70% of Minnesotans participate in outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation in Minnesota directly supports 140,000 jobs—more than the state's hospitals and health systems. Outdoor recreation generates \$16.7 billion in consumer spending in Minnesota, \$4.5 billion in wages and salaries, and \$1.4 billion in state and local tax revenue.⁶

Parks and open space help Minnesota communities stay healthy and save money.

- **A huge amount of scientific research now links access to close-to-home parks and green space with improved physical and mental health.**⁷ One large-scale study showed that living within 0.6 miles of green space is linked to lower rates of 15 major diseases, including heart disease (15% lower), diabetes (20% lower), and depression (25% lower).⁸ Cardiovascular disease affects over 5% of Minnesotans;⁹ diabetes affects nearly 8%;¹⁰ and depression affects over 12% of seniors.¹¹ Spending time in nature can also reduce symptoms of attention-deficit disorder,

which affects over 11% of Minnesota children.¹² Currently, cardiovascular disease costs the U.S. economy \$330 billion per year, diabetes costs \$327 billion, and depression costs \$210 billion.

- **Avoiding costs for cities and private utilities.** Conservation, particularly forest and wetland conservation, helps provide cleaner water and air. Protected watersheds can provide as much as a 10-fold savings in treating drinking water,¹³ and nationwide forests provide \$6.8 billion dollars in air pollution removal each year.¹⁴ Studies have calculated that for every \$1 invested in conservation \$4 to \$11 is returned in natural goods and services like clean water.¹⁵

Minnesota's farmers benefit from conservation. Conservation protects the land, water, soil, and pollinator resources that are crucial to the state's \$18 billion agricultural economy.¹⁶ Minnesota farmers leveraged \$2.7 billion in conservation program dollars from the USDA between 1995 and 2017.¹⁷

- Minnesota lost more than 3% of its farmland in just five years between 2007 and 2012. Publicly-funded voluntary conservation programs can play a big role in protecting agricultural livelihoods. Minnesota has nearly one million acres protected by conservation easements. Conservation easements and other conservation programs can help keep prime farmland in production and provide funding for farmers to take marginal lands out of production.¹⁸

The Land and Water Conservation Fund in Minnesota

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has invested more than \$245 million in Minnesota's parks and open spaces—from Voyageurs National Park to the Saint Croix National Scenic River.¹⁹ The LWCF's State Assistance Program has supported 1,285 local projects, including community parks across the state.²⁰

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, located in the northern third of Superior National Forest, is an outdoor recreation paradise featuring more than 1,200 miles of canoe routes, 11 hiking trails, and 2,000 designated campsites. Embedded throughout are approximately 82,400 acres of Minnesota School Trust lands. The Superior National Forest was awarded \$4 million in LWCF funding for the first phase of an effort to purchase these lands, which will expand recreational opportunities and improve management, generating revenue for Minnesota's schools and contributing to the local timber economy.²¹

1. The Trust for Public Land, "ParkScore."; 2. Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, "Minnesota's Parks, Trails, and Economy."; 3. US Census Bureau, "2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation--California."; 4. National Recreation and Park Association, "The Economic Impact of Local Parks | Research | National Recreation and Park Association."; 5. Cherveney, "Minnesota State Parks Seek Funding Increase."; 6. Outdoor Industry Association, "Outdoor Industry Association Economic Report--California."; 7. Kuo, "How Might Contact with Nature Promote Human Health?"; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, "The Health Benefits of the Great Outdoors."; 8. Maas et al., "Morbidity Is Related to a Green Living Environment."; 9. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Percent of Adults with Cardiovascular Disease."; 10. CDC, "U.S. Diabetes Surveillance System."; 11. United Health Foundation, "America's Health Rankings."; 12. CDC, "State-Based Prevalence Data of Parent Reported ADHD Diagnosis by a Health Care Provider."; 13. The Trust for Public Land, "The Economic Benefits and Fiscal Impact of Parks and Open Space in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York."; 14. Nowak et al., "Tree and Forest Effects on Air Quality and Human Health in the United States."; 15. The Trust for Public Land, "The Economic Benefits of Great Outdoors Colorado and the Conservation Trust Fund: Fact Sheet"; The Trust for Public Land, "Vermont's Return on Investment in Land Conservation"; The Trust for Public Land, "Return on the Investment From the Land & Water Conservation Fund."; 16. USDA ERS, "USDA ERS - State Fact Sheets."; 17. Environmental Working Group (EWG), "EWG's Farm Subsidy Database."; 18. Ducks Unlimited and The Trust for Public Land, "National Conservation Easement Database | NCED: State Profiles."; 19. LWCF Coalition, "Save LWCF: California Spotlight."; 20. National Recreation and Park Association, "Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program: State Fact Sheets."